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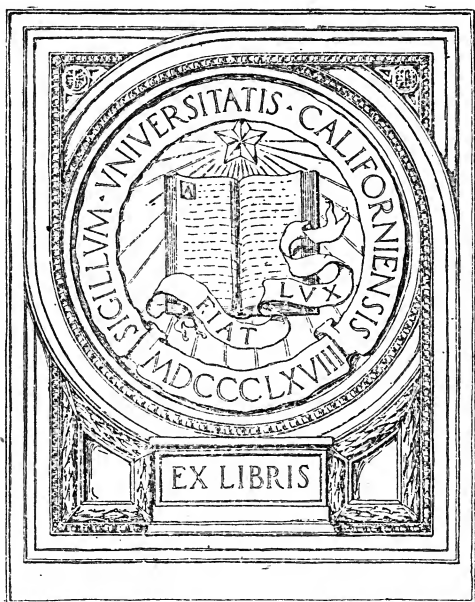
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AN OLD MAN'S
MUSINGS
AND OTHER VERSES



By
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An Old Man's Musings
and
OTHER VERSES

BY
WILLIAM HATHORN MILLS



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MUSINGS

De Senectute

WHAT are the things, the lessons, which old age
Teaches a man, when he has come to it?
Three things, at least; and he need be no sage
To know them; they are learnt by native wit.

First tolerance—tolerance of the infirmities
To which all flesh is heir, of aims and views
Not his, of youth's impetuosities;
For each and all of these he finds excuse.

This tolerance is not careless unconcern,
Not weak assent to things he scorns and hates;
It's patient hope that ignorance may learn;
For better things he works and, hoping, waits.

Next level-mindedness. "Naught in excess"
Is Nature's word to him; he does his best,
Aims at the golden mean, desires success,
But, missing it, is not over-much depressed.

Life, he has seen, has many ups and downs,
But mostly strikes an average on the whole;
And so he sets its smiles against its frowns,
And keeps unswayed the balance of his soul.

Lastly submission to the Eternal Will;
He slighted it, maybe he fought it, when
His life was young within him; now the still
Small Voice speaks to him, and he says Amen.

He knows that death cannot be far away,
Ponders its mystery, and, in the light
Shed on it by the Resurrection Day,
Sees in its witness grace no less than might.

It bids him realize God's omnipotence;
It bids him realize also God's intent
To bring us thro' this world of time and sense
To the eternal world, and bows consent.

Irrequieta Quies

REST is not idleness; there's rest in work,
In quiet industry;
A thousand demons of unrest may lurk
In sloth and lethargy.

Labour there is, of course, whose toil and toil
Makes soul and body faint;
Aye, and there is the work that seeks to foil
The work of seer and saint.

These are not restful labours, nor are these
The work we have to do;
We must be busy as the busy bees,
If peace we would ensue.

Add to such industry the charities,
Which serve our brethren's need;
These crown our work; our very ministries
Bring peace and rest indeed.

The idler is a weary soul, to whom
Rest is a thing unkent;
Satan employs him, and he earns a doom
Of restless discontent.

Aequam Memento

ONCE, fired by thoughts of high success,
I cherished dreams of wealth and fame,
And learnt to know the bitterness
Of disappointed hope and aim.

Now, by a life's experience taught,
I wait to see what time will bring,
Not downcast, but expecting naught
Of any man or any thing.

That's to throw up the game of life;
Yes; but is gaming life's intent,
Life's meaning? Anyhow, rid of strife
And disappointments, I'm content.

I keep my head, or do my best
To keep it; bear what bear I must;
Work as I may; as for the rest—
Well, Providence has the rest in trust.

Keep your mind, said the Roman bard,
Level, or in prosperity,
Or when life's path is steep and hard;
Tough work, but good philosophy!

Straight

IF you would hit the waiting nail
Upon the head, and never fail,
Aim straight.

If you would keep your goal in sight,
And, when ways differ, choose the right,
See straight.

If you would win success, that's worth
The name, on this phantasmal earth,
Run straight.

If you would gain the trust and love
Of those with whom you work and move,
Live straight.

If from earth's shadows you would rise
To the clear light of Paradise,
Climb straight.

Gentleship

❧ HO is a gentleman?
Is he a man whose pedigree
Is as long as the length of a poplar tree?
Is he a gentleman?
That is a *primâ facie*
Sense of the word, but a pedigree
Doesn't make a gentleman.

Is he a man who bears a name
Set by forbears on the scroll of fame?
Is he a gentleman?
Yes, if he lives up to its claim;
If not, no title, no rank, no name,
Can make him a gentleman.

Is he a man who has a right
To bear a coat of arms—a quite
Easily won right now?
That's heralds' law; whether a soul,
Thus licensed, is on true honour's roll
It does not, and cannot, show.

Smart dress, fine jewels, wealth—do they
Set on a man the grand cachet,
The stamp, of a gentleman?
A churl may be smart, and have money-bags;
And a man may be poor and clothed in rags,
And still be a gentleman.

A gentleman is a man who is
Gentle to all about him—this
Is the test of a gentleman.
If he isn't gentle, not noble birth,
Not titles, not all the gold on earth,
Can make him a gentleman.

This gentleness is of sympathy
With weaker souls—in it you see
The heart of a gentleman.
It makes, with the graces of loyalty,
Simplicity, generosity,
The perfect gentleman.

The poet is born; to learn his art
You must have within you the poet's heart—
His inborn wit and ken.
Thus humblest souls, with an inborn gift
Of gentleness, by this grace uplift,
Are Nature's gentlemen.

Note: Compare the saying "Noblesse oblige."

A Training School

WHY are we born into this life,
This world of pain and care,
Where troubles vex us and where strife
Is rampant everywhere?

Two things at least are plain to sight,
For all who will to see:
Two truths that, realized, throw light
Upon the mystery.

One is that we are born to work,
To keep our garden drest;
If difficulties make us shirk,
We are not worthy rest.

Rest is the prize of work well done—
Work done with zeal and zest,
Of effort till success is won;
The idler cannot rest.

Again, what means the instinctive tie,
The bond of common blood,
But that men are one family,
One blood-bound brotherhood?

Cain slew his brother, and thereby
Brought jealous passions in;
Aye, but all true humanity
Cries out against that sin.

Ambitious wars, trade-jealousies,
Self-seeking politics,
The grafter's game of grab—at these
The true world-conscience kicks.

Life is, in brief, a training-school;
It trains to energy,
And, if men learn its golden rule,
To kindly sympathy.

Sunt Lacrimae Rerum

SCULPTURED upon a temple-wall,
Where Dido ruled the Libyan strand,
The Trojan prince astonished scanned
The story of his country's fall.

"Here, even here, is sympathy
With Troy," he cried; "these pictured tears
Call us to put aside all fears,
And promise us hospitality."

The oneness of humanity—
That was the truth he saw in part;
It's ours to lay that truth to heart,
And fear to break that unity.

Cain broke it, and the curse of Cain
Awaits all souls who stir up strife,
And shed the blood, which is the life,
For pride of place or selfish gain.

Against the curse a blessing stands—
The blessing won by souls who fight
In the defence of Truth and Right,
With loyal hearts and willing hands.

Aye, and it rests on those who make
The cause of suffering souls their care:
Who serve the poor and weak, and bear
Burdens of others, for love's sake.

"War" said a soldier once, "is hell,"
And yet he fought for liberty;
And they who fight for unity,
And what it means and claims, do well.

Words may mean much or little; three
Are charged with meaning high and broad--
These sign-posts on the upward road,
Unity, Sympathy, Charity.

Beyond the Veil

HAVE they no thought for us, no care—
The dear ones who have gone before?
Are they incurious how we fare?
Is all forgot that was of yore?

Ah no; a stream of sympathy
Runs thro' Creation's mighty whole—
A limitless telepathy,
That links forever soul to soul.

Why, even of old the Roman bard
Knew this, who with his poet's ken
Saw how the dead still have regard
To all the things of mortal men:

Telling how old Anchises' shade
Watched o'er Aeneas' wander-years:
How for his weal he yearned, and made
His own the wanderer's hopes and fears.

Thus too, by love and pity moved,
From out their sphere beyond the veil
May friends, true-hearted souls we loved
On earth, reach after us, nor fail.

We cannot see, we cannot hear,
Thoro' the intervening screen;
They can, and still they hold us dear;
Still they remember what has been.

And as they prayed for us of old,
And we for them, so pray they yet,
So pray we; otherwise love were cold,
And hearts were learning to forget.

They cannot shape our destinies.
And yet from them in very deed
May come the thoughts that make us wise,
Or comfort us, in time of need.

Their influence, all unfelt, unseen,
May shield us from some threatened blow—
May, as a barrier, stand between
Us and the onset of some foe.

Death, thou canst slay this body; thou
Canst take our dear ones from our sight;
But break our fellowship? That, we trow,
World-conqueror, is beyond thy might.

The Valley of Baca

ALL things are charged with tears. Ah, why?
Because the life we live on earth
Is all a strange complexity
Of pain and pleasure, grief and mirth.

It's mortal life, and yet has gleams
In it of immortality;
It's fallen life, and yet has dreams
Of Eden and recovery.

All Nature suffered by the Fall
That banished man from Paradise;
Evil came in, and therefore all
Creation, anguished, groans and sighs.


Sin's discords marred earth's harmonies,
And, fell as blasts of poisonous breath,
Came strife, disease, disorder, lies,
And, overshadowing all things, death.

That's why all things have tears in them—
Tears moved by suffering, failure, loss;
That's why the Babe of Bethlehem
Was born to death upon the Cross.

Yes, but that death waved back the sword
That barred the gates of Paradise;
The guardian cherubs knew their Lord,
And welcomed Him in glad surprise.

For us He opened out the way
To where death has no empery,
Where light and life and love hold sway,
And tears are wiped from every eye.

Discipline

" HOM the gods love, die young," 'tis said;
What does that mean? Is it that life
Is but a curse, and that the dead
Are blest as freed from toil and strife?

That's what the saying means, I guess;
But is it true? For is not life
A training school for blessedness?
And is not peace born out of strife?

The world is full of evil—yes;
And life has many a care and pain;
Wars of ambition bring distress
On nations; toilers toil in vain.

But not all strife is evil strife;
Life has its joys as well as woes;
Pain may be as the surgeon's knife;
To strength thro' toil the toiler grows.

"Strive," said Christ, "to enter in
By the strait gate"—aye, "agonize";
There's the good fight—the fight with sin—
And life eternal is the prize.

Failures may open out the way
For high success; the difficulties
Which thwart our hopes, and vex us, may
Be priceless blessings in disguise.

Life is a trial-time; each test
Tries us to brace our energies.
Battling with evil, doing our best,
Nor losing heart, we win the prize.

Strugglings in weariness of heart:
The agony of self-sacrifice—
These shape the soul to bear its part
In the fair life of Paradise.

Some tender souls there are who need
Little of this world's discipline;
Such souls God's angels haste to lead
Back to the world which knows no sin.

Amplius

A FAMOUS painter looked upon
A student's work, and wrote thereon
Just Amplius.

"Work out your visions, your designs,"
It said, "on broader, ampler lines"—
That Amplius.

"Lengthen thy cords," the prophet cried;
"Make wide thy bounds, and yet more wide"—
'Twas Amplius.

We too, to meet our spirit's need,
Should on our work, our aims, our creed,
Write Amplius.

For hearts are selfish, narrow, cold,
Till they have learnt the secret told
By Amplius.

"Get beyond self, get beyond all
Self-seeking narrowness," is the call
Of Amplius.

"Think thoughts, do deeds, of charity,
Sympathy, generosity,"
Says Amplius.

It's ours, in answer to that cry,
To make our hearts and lives reply,
"Aye, Amplius."

So shall we come to realize
The truth of things in clearer wise,
And Amplius.

So shall we make our life's design
Copy more nearly the Divine;
That's Amplius.

Sublimius

OF all the mottoes, which a man
Can choose, there is none better than
Sublimius.

The youth who clomb the mountain side
Crying Excelsior! should have cried
Sublimius.

"Taller" was what he said, but his
Idea was "Higher up"—that is
Sublimius.

It brings hard work, for it implies
Ascent; by difficult steps we rise
Sublimius.

Yes, but it's worth it all the time;
We mount to happiness as we climb
Sublimius.

You hear as it were a noble chord
Of solemn music in that word,
Sublimius.

High purpose, scorn of self and sin,
Patient endeavour, meet within
Sublimius.

It says what "Sursum Corda" says,
And adds, "Lift up your lives always
Sublimius."

Labour is prayer; aye, and it's praise;
"Work out your aspirations" says
Sublimius.

It means the path of duty trod—
The path which leads, as up to God,
Sublimius.

Avalon

"**L**AMBKIN and wolf"—that is, tame beasts
wild—

"Shall dwell together, and a little child
Shall lead them"—this, said Judah's seer, shall be
In the Messiah's reign of equity.

Not yet is that new order consummate;
Not yet is this world rid of strife and hate;
Wild beasts still ravin for their prey, and still
Men, wilder than wild beasts, work death and ill.

Yet there's a ministry of leading on,
Which children serve, unto an Avalon
Of peace—their own small world of shows and plays—
Where tired old souls may rest, e'en nowadays.

Led by a little child, sharing its joys,
Its interests, its fancies, its employs,
Souls, weary of life's war, find a surcease
From the long agony, and are at peace.

And it may be that, when stern punishment
Has purged brute souls, Heaven's after-instrument
Of discipline will be—not judgment's rod,
But—hands of children, leading them to God.

Words

NOT words but deeds—'tis an old tale—
Yet words have worth and use;
True words are gospels; if they fail,
'Tis ears that need excuse.

"Words, idle words," folk say, and yet
Words may be things that do;
"Up, Guards, and at 'em" sped the onset
That settled Waterloo.

"Noblesse oblige"—a phrase—may mean
Devotion unto death;
Words may be fire—aye, words have been
As wafts of heavenly breath.

Rightly we blame the man whose tongue
Does all he cares to do;
But what of him whose words mean strong
Purpose and effort too?

Rightly again we blame the man
Who speaks to curse or lie;
Speech that is used for lie or ban
Savours of blasphemy.

Mere words, bad words—these are as naught,
Or, worse, as injury;
But words that echo gracious thought
Have a true ministry.

But ears must hear; in vain the sower
Sows seed in barren earth;
Dull hearts rob eloquence of its power,
And make speech nothing worth.

Who scorn good words scorn seeds of Truth,
And miss her fruits thereby;
They had—and this shall be their ruth—
Their opportunity.

A Pilgrim's Progress

DEATH is the door to life—to that large life
That lies beyond the grave: the life wherein
Souls are delivered from earth's ceaseless strife,
And cleansed by purgatorial discipline:
The life that, as aeonian, stage by stage
Lifts souls, that will, to man's true heritage.

Aeonian life—that is, a life that grows
Thro' ages to the fulness of its height;
Each life-age has its death, to mark its close,
And usher in an age of higher light;
And souls rise thro' these stages of ascent
Just as God calls them, and their wills consent.

Man's heritage—what is it? God designed
That man should be to Him a very son,
To stand before His Face: to know His mind,
And do His bidding gladly and anon.
Man is an heir of Heaven, and Heaven is still
Open to every soul that does God's will.

Ah, if the prodigal will but return,
He yet may win back to his lost estate;
The vision of God, Godlikeness, life eterne,
Await him, beckon him home thro' mercy's gate;
Return may mean a weary pilgrimage,
And long; yet may he make it, stage by stage.

A Mighty Monosyllable

LOVE—what is love? A love there is,
So called, that is of selfishness;
True love has naught to do with this;
It seeks—not blessing, but—to bless;
With faith and hope on either side,
It leads the graces that abide.

Yes, that is love—the charity
That is a temper of God's heart,
Requicken'd in all souls that die
To self, and choose the better part;
Self-love spells death; love cannot die;
Its life is of eternity.

Its name, a monosyllable;
Itself unutterably great,
Love is of Heaven, as lust of hell;
It masters self, and conquers hate.
The Hebrew Tetragrammaton
And it, for God is Love, are one.

The Mystery of Being

WHAT man was, what he is, what he
May be— who has not sought
To solve the threefold mystery
Of being, of will, of thought?

Seers have caught mirrored gleams of Truth
In Revelation's light;
But did they see the very Sooth,
And understand the sight?

That faithful souls may come to be
True children of the Lord
We know from Christ's own lips, and we
Can rest upon His word.

But there were those about His path—
As Scribe and Pharisee—
To whom He said, in righteous wrath,
"Children of hell are ye."

Is man a complex entity—
Part devilish, part divine,
Part brute—wherein perversity
Has marred a great design?

In body to the brutes akin,
He shares their life in part;
But Satan, save thro' man's own sin,
Has no place in his heart.

Into man's nature at his birth
God breathed two lives—so runs
The record—one, the life of earth,
The other, of His sons.

And, had not his self-will transgressed
The Father's single ban,
Man had grown up, blessing and blest,
Unto the perfect man.

'Twas selfishness brought down a curse,
By opening hearts to sin;
Man had free choice; he chose the worse,
And Satan entered in.

And still he enters every heart
Ruled by self-will, and still,
Playing in it the Tempter's part,
Betrays it into ill.

Aye, and there are who, giving place
To Satan, come to be
Dehumanized—too brute, too base,
To be of the family.

Yet souls have that in them which can
Resist the Evil One;
The life of God is in each man,
And God claims him as son.

Still lies before him the Great Choice;
Still penitence finds grace;
Aye, and it makes God's heart rejoice
When sinners seek His Face.

No soul need be a brute; no soul
Need be a devil's child;
The Father's house is our true goal—
The home of the undefiled.

Twixt the old Paradise and new
A weary desert lies;
Aye, but thro' it pure souls and true
Win to the Heavenlies.

Euge

GOD and my own right hand—the cry
Echoes Saint George's creed—
'Tis Faith and Work in harmony,
God's strength behind man's deed.

God first—no work can be good work
But what His will commands;
Man next—God helps no souls who shirk
Tasks that lie to their hands.

Life is no day of idleness,
Or sin; its span is given
For work, for acts of righteousness,
For reachings after Heaven.

Duty to God, duty to man—
That's life's true industry;
Two words sum up its scope and plan—
Holiness, Charity.

Who make this royal rule their own,
And shape their lives thereon,
Shall win, before the Great White Throne,
The Master's kind "Well done."

MISCELLA

Kinship

STAND by your own; stand by
Your kith and kin;
Stand by the family,
Thro' thick and thin;
Stand up for its good name;
It's your name too;
Never let taint of shame
Hurt it thro' you.

If fortune seems to frown,
And things go ill
With them, stand by your own;
Hold to them still.
Keep kinship's claim in mind,
Remembering
This—that "akin" and "kind"
Mean the same thing.

You may not turn your face
From any soul
That needs and asks your grace—
Your pity's dole.
To flout such were a sin,
But the blood-call—
The cry of kith and kin—
Ranks first of all.

Traitors, who love a lie,
For profit's sake
Break other ties; this tie
They cannot break.
Nothing, All Nature saith,
Snaps the blood-bond;
It holds thro' life to death,
Aye, and beyond.

A Cameo

A BOY'S verse, dedicate years ago
To her, whose tender sympathy
Mothered him—'tis a cameo,
Clear-cut as in chalcedony.

A picture but in words? Well, yes;
And yet what carver's artistry
Could make this vision of loveliness
More present to our spirit's eye?

Her "hyacinth hair," her "classic face,"
Her "Naiad airs," the charm that gives
Her form its spiritual grace—
All this we see, and for us she lives:

Lives as they lived in breathing bronze,
Or marble, whom the golden age
Of sculptors imaged—the mighty ones
Of mythic cult and epic page.

Art-gems there are that are for the few,
But, thanks to Edgar Allen Poe,
No matter where they be, or who,
All souls may see this cameo.

Vates Sacer

THE poet is born, not made; aye, and yet he
Must make himself, if poet he is to be:
Must learn the secrets of the poet's art:
Must find his way to the great human heart:
Must see in fragrant flower and glittering star
Mirrored reflections of the things that are:
Must hear the solemn music of the spheres,
And echo its harmonies to duller ears:
Must use all Nature as a parable,
Telling what else were all ineffable.
No "frenzy fine," no sweep of "rolling eye,"
Will make an expert in this alchemy.
The poet by birth to reach majority
Must nurse and train his native faculty;
Poetic genius in embryo
Is his, but he must rear and make it grow.
It needs self-knowledge and self-discipline
To make his heart drink in the Breath divine.
It needs the learner's patient industry
To store his mind with language pure and high.
Words noble must he seek for noble thought,
Nor rest content with less than that he sought:
Must file and chasten, alter and erase,
Till the true word at last finds its true place.
The mighty bards of Hellas and of Rome
Must beckon him to the heights whereto they clomb;
Milton and Dante too must point his aim
Above the petty lust of vulgar fame.
To lift men's hearts, to make them see and feel
True Beauty—its example and appeal—
That is the poet's work—the enterprise
Which is at once his calling and its prize.
So and so only shall he train his soul
To climb Parnassus' peak—the poet's goal.
So and so only shall he make his rime
A thing to conquer death, and outlive Time.

Posies

POETRY is the language of the soul—
Its thoughts made utterance by the spirit's
breath;
To reach the great world-heart—that is its goal;
Its themes—the things that count in life and death.

Carols of birds, the thunder's echoing roll,
The rivulet's laugh, the South Wind's quiet sigh,
The still small voice that thrilled the prophet's soul,
All meet in that which men call Poetry.

In this phantasmal world, which men count home,
We see but outward shows, and call them real;
To the true bard, as to the seer, there come
Visions of that which IS—of the ideal

She came—the Spirit eterne of Poetry—
Into this order of created things
To find interpreters, and voice thereby
To human ears the message that She brings;
And hearts are ever answering to her call,
But only one small bird has heard it all.

Poetry, Music, and the painter's art,
Aye, and the sculptor's, are a harmony
Of revelations, imaging to the heart
The Beauty that is of Eternity.

Poetry is the workmanship whereby
The inspirations of immortal breath
Are fashioned into song—a symphony
Of words, whose echoes ring thro' life and death.

Sevenfold as the voice of Music
Is the voice of Poetry,

Ranging from the stately Epic
To the mirth of Comedy;
But its best loved note is Lyric,
Sweet Euterpe's specialty.

When Poetry came to this Babylon,
She found a babel of discordant cries;
She called in Music, and with her anon
Resolved the discords into harmonies.
So Arcady took birth. Ah! Well-a-day!
That souls who will not hear brawl on for aye!

A Poem is of heaven and earth; its soul
Is of the breath divine; its symmetry
Is of the poet; bowing to the control
Of rhythm and rime he shapes his artistry,
Until the thing stands forth a perfect Whole—
Thought clothed in words that match it—Poetry.

Poesy is a craft; a breath divine
Must be its vital spark, but artistry
Must shape its fancies, and the outward sign
Must match the inward grace in dignity.
Pure words and noble lend verse majesty;
Balance and pattern give it symmetry.

The Arts are sisters; Poetry is kin
To Music, kin too to the painter's art;
Thus each interprets each, and thus all win
Alike their triumphs as they touch the heart.

Poetry is creation, it must call
That into being which were otherwise naught;
He who would fashion it needs first of all
The inspiration of a noble thought;
This won, his art must image it—must give
It substance—shaped in words that breathe and live.

Beauty—the beauty that is goodness too,
For both are of one stock—whatever things
Are fair and noble, innocent and true—
Of beauty such as this the poet sings.
He sees a vision beckoning souls to rise,
And points their hopes and longings to the skies.

Co-operant in one great design,
Music and Poetry combine
To lift man's heart and mind;
It is not poetry, it is
Not music, that comes short of this;
It is but noise and wind.

Music and Poetry are one at heart—
Two bodies, but one soul;
Together, as each plays its proper part,
They make a perfect Whole.

They have their own trench-songs—the men
Who face the Hun, now and again
Varied by joke or story;
But, when they stand affronting death,
And less dour souls might hold their breath,
The Scots sing "Annie Laurie."

Strained nerves—what helps them in the tense
Pause of expectance or suspense,
When battle is at hand?
Ah then, the trenches' length along,
You'll hear the lilt of some old home-song,
That speaks of Motherland.

Mirrors

HERE in enigma and in mystery
We see and hear what lies beyond the veil,
Now in some sunset's mystic imagery,
Now in the melody of the nightingale;
For Nature is a mirror, broken in part,
Yet flashing gleams of truth upon the heart.

"Draw up the blind, friends, and let in the light"—
So spake the dying seeker after Truth;
Death answered, and flung open to his sight
The gates of light ideal—of God's own Sooth.

In Nature's mirrors here we see
The mysteries of Eternity;
And we may mirror that which lies
Beyond their ken to mortal eyes:
May train our hearts to be in sooth
Reflectors of eternal Truth.
For, as we gaze with open face
Upon the glory of God's grace,
It takes us, shapes us, stamps on us
The image of itself; and thus
Makes hearts and lives reflect to sight
The beauty of the Infinite.

(Cf. 1 Cor. XIII. 12. 2 Cor. III. 18.)

Epigrammata Quaedam

Life

LIFE is existence, manifest
In its activities:
A spiritual thing expressed
In sacramental wise.
Its tenements are the outward sign:
Itself, a spark of fire divine.

The Gospel story tells us what
Life—perfect life—must be;
It's being, and it's doing, that
Which is of Charity.

Life is a spring of energy;
It's being, and it's doing;
And, as the doing, so must be
The being—joy or ruing.

The Breath of Lives

(Gen. 2: 7.)

What is man's life? A breath;
It breathes once, and is gone;
Yes, but man's spirit outlives death;
That breath breathes on.

Facilis Descensus

The Roman bards apparently
Led off with forms of Comedy—
The rude Fescennine verse, whose chaff
And jokes were sung to raise a laugh—

Which shows that in world-history
There was a human infancy;
For childhood's tastes are gastronomic,
And, when not gastronomic, comic.
That's natural enough, for both
Tastes answer to the laws of growth.
But what if any later age
Falls back to life's infantile stage,
And, proudly posing as adult,
Yet makes Thalia's sock its cult,
And turns up its aesthetic nose
At everything but jokes and shows?
So fell Old Rome degenerate—
A warning never out of date
To childish man and childish State.

Old-Time Apothegms

“**B**RING back your shield or be brought back upon
your shield, my son”—
So Spartan mothers sent their sons to war; so wars
were won.

That is the worst corruption which corrupts that which
is best;

That, which was best, corrupted is of all things rottenest.

So fallen Lucifer became of fiends the fiendliest;
So fallen saints too may become of sinners sinfullest.

When men desert their senses, when they cast out
reason, then**

God wills that they should perish—that is, as being
no longer men,

He turns them to destruction, that they may be born
again.

We bear two wallets, one upon our breast, one on
our back;

Our neighbours' faults—they're handy there to see—
fill the front sack;

Our own we store, well out of sight, within the
hinder pack.

“Big book, big ill”—the sentiment reflects old-world
ideas,

Perhaps our own. But what about Encyclopaedias?

Water will hollow, drop by drop, the hardest rock—
'tis said;

Eternal cataracts wouldn't even dent a Know-All's
head.

***Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementit.* God does
not will to destroy a man until the man has, by
sinning against it, quenched the light that is in him—
the light that makes him man. The transitive form
“dementat” lacks authority. Cp. Psalm XC. 3.

D. E. S.

UPON her dying bed, in perfect peace,
Diana lay; within the solemn room—
Still with the stillness of a holy calm—
Her nearest and her dearest with sad eyes
Watched her fast-failing breath;

when suddenly
A radiant glory lighted all her face
With a half-satisfied, half-yearning smile;
And eagerly with upward look, as though
She saw heaven's hosts descending from on high
To carry her aloft to rest and peace,
She strove to raise herself, and lift her hands
Towards them as they came; and joyfully
She whispered—"*Two of them can carry me
Easily, easily*";

her pale lips closed,
But o'er her happy features still there shone
The smile of glad content, still in her eyes
The light of welcome; and, while thus she gazed
On the bright glories bursting on her sight,
She passed into the Paradise of God.

O crowning triumph of a life that had,
By grace of the most Holy Trinity,
Fought the good fight and conquered; for the strife
Was over now; the victories won: and lo!
The angels came and ministered to her.

Dear in the Father's sight is such a death,
And holy; but not simply for her sake
Whose eyes beheld it was that vision shown,
But also for their sakes who stood around,
Aye, and for those to whom the tale should come.
It took from grief its sting, and bade them know
Who loved her that thrice blessed was her lot,
And that beyond earth's changes, where are set

The many mansions of the Father's House,
There, 'mid the waiting throng of ransomed saints,
The peace of God was hers for evermore.

But not to loved ones only did it speak.
It came a token to the Church at large,
As came Epiphanies to Paul, and John,
And martyred Stephen, eloquent of love
And tender care—His care and love Who blessed
The exiled Jacob, in his hour of need,
With Bethel's vision, and made manifest
The hosts of Dothan to a doubting soul.
"O human hearts," it said, "endure and trust
As seeing Him Who is invisible.
Heaven is about you, though your eyes are blind,
Or catch but faint reflections of the truth,
And the Sabaoth of the King of kings
Not only battle, ranged in serried ranks,
Against the legions of the Prince of Hell,
But also have their several ministries
Of comfort and of help, as sent to guide
Through this dark wilderness of doubt and fear
To opened heavens the souls which Christ's dear love
Has ransomed from the grave of self and sin,
And called to live His life, and share His joy."

Christmas Day

(S. Luke I. 78)

HAS God's heart room for sympathy
With fallen man, with sinful earth?
That is man's question. God's reply
Stands written in the Virgin Birth.

Amaranto

DEAD are the flowers which we brought our child,
As she lay on her dying bed;
They gave their message, and now each bloom
Is withered and dry and dead.

And faded the wreaths which hid her grave
Till it seemed like a garden's pride;
They sent their message, and they too now
Are things to be cast aside.

But the love which they witnessed—that is not dead;
Love is of eternity;
And the tale which they told her is told her still
By flowers that never die.

Homeward Bound

SOFT and kind was the morning breeze,
As it sprang from its home in the West,
And kissed the pale face of a dying child,
Clasped close to its mother's breast.

And fresh and clear was the midday breeze,
As it swept o'er the dancing sea,
And filled with its breath the bellying sails
Of a good ship, running free.

And calm and quiet the evening breeze,
As it died o'er land and sea;
For child and ship it had wafted home
To the haven where each would be.

Troth-plight

WE plighted troth upon a day—
The day my lad went off to sea;
We swore that we'd be true for aye,
And true for aye we'll surely be.

I know that we shall meet again;
Aye, but it won't be here and now;
His ship lies low beneath the main,
And he—well, he's aloft, I trow.

Einheriar

THERE were brave men ere Agamemnon's days,
Aye many, but all unwept they lie, unknown
For lack of sacred bard to hymn their praise,
Of epic song to publish their renown.

So mourned the Roman poet; his lament
Echoes itself not once nor twice again,
As heroes fall; as gallant soul is rent
From stalwart body, and earth receives her slain.

It's always so, it always must be so,
In war; for in the battle's fierce pell-mell
Men fall by thousands—fall as foe meets foe,
Fall to the fiery storm of shot and shell.

And many a doughty feat of arms is known
Only to those who wrought it as they died—
Acts of self-sacrifice, of lives laid down
For comrades, in life's beauty and life's pride.

Who shall rehearse such golden deeds as these?
How shall the whole wide world of nations breed
Poets enow to hymn such gallantries
In full tale, and according to their meed?

But not unknown upon the other side
Are heroes when they pass from mortal ken:
Not whelmed in darkness, as the poet sighed,
But manifest as the souls of valiant men.

Their record goes before them, and the name
Of each true soul, for its fidelity,
Finds place in the triumphal Hall of Fame,
The Panheroion, of Eternity.

Aye, and to all, who do their duty, come
Due recognition and a sure reward—
The "Well done" of approval, and a home
Of rest, and then—work for their King and Lord.

Their badge of honour is no heraldic shield,
No bar or jewel or any earthly sign;
Blazoned upon their foreheads stand, revealed
In mystic hieroglyphs, the Names Divine.

Not nameless, O not nameless, are they there;
Each name is entered on the Eternal roll;
Not lost to sight; the everlasting Care
Numbers them, and would miss a single soul.

Note—"Einheriar" is the Norse name for warriors who
enter Valhalla.

Our Dead

WHAT shall we say of those who gave
Their lives at Britain's claim,
Nor held them dear so they might save
Their Motherland's fair fame:

Who fought and fell for kith and kin,
For Freedom and the Right;
To whom disloyalty was sin,
And Justice more than Might?

From the Homeland and from afar,
Across the seas, they came;
The blood-bond drew them to the war—
That, and the British name.

Now, of the hearts that beat so high,
Many are stilled for aye;
And lives that seemed too young to die,
Too dear, have passed away.

Shall we deplore them? Hearts are rent,
And weeping were no shame;
Nay, they are lift above lament;
Paean, not dirge, they claim.

As Hellas in the olden days
Bent o'er her gallant dead,
And gave them— not her tears, but— praise,
We dry our tears, half-shed;

And, with the thanks, the grateful praise,
Of those he died to save,
We lay a wreath of deathless bays
Upon each hero's grave.

On Mount Soracte

(Written for a Druidical function.)

○ Tau-Bel-Hesus, as before
This karn, your local shrine,
We stand, as Druids wont of yore,
We make our mystic sign.
Refrain. Hey derry down, derry
down.*

We offer too of mistletoe
A spray, by way of sample;
We want the rest ourselves, and so
We hope you'll think this ample.
Refrain.

And on your altar, see, we light
An emblematic fire,
Not simply as a pretty sight—
A thing for to admire.
Refrain.

Nor does it flame, as once it would
Have flamed, to make a pyre;
Its object is to speak of good
Purpose, and high desire.
Refrain.

We burn no human victims now,
Nor eat them when they're torrid;**
Our laws such customs disallow—
In fact, we think them horrid.
Refrain.

The fires we kindle symbolize
Truth, purity, devotion;
And Tau-Bel-Hesus, if you're wise,
You will accept this notion.
Refrain.

* Said to be an old Druidical chorus

** According to Pliny, the Druids ate their victims.

Dogged

A MOST unscrupulous little sinner,
Bearing a soft romantic name,
Sheila, with naught of softness in her—
Into our home and hearts she came.

Of bluest aristocratic blood,
Bred of the stock they breed in Skye,
Long-haired, short-legged, sharp-nosed, she stood
Somewhere about six inches high.

Thoroughly spoilt, she had a hot
Temper, and any amount of pride;
Her tastes were dainty; she claimed and got
The best of all that the house supplied.

Once, thought to be delicate, she was clad
In a jacket; she had no use for it;
Tho' little more than a toy, she had
A bulldog's pluck, and a bulldog's grit.

She'd a sense of sport in her soul all right,
But limited in its range and scope;
She had no sympathy of delight
With the spaniel's joy, or the setter's hope.

In a sort of half-hearted way she'd run
After rabbits; at times she would chivy cats;
But, if you wanted to see some fun,
You had only to mention the one word—"Rats."

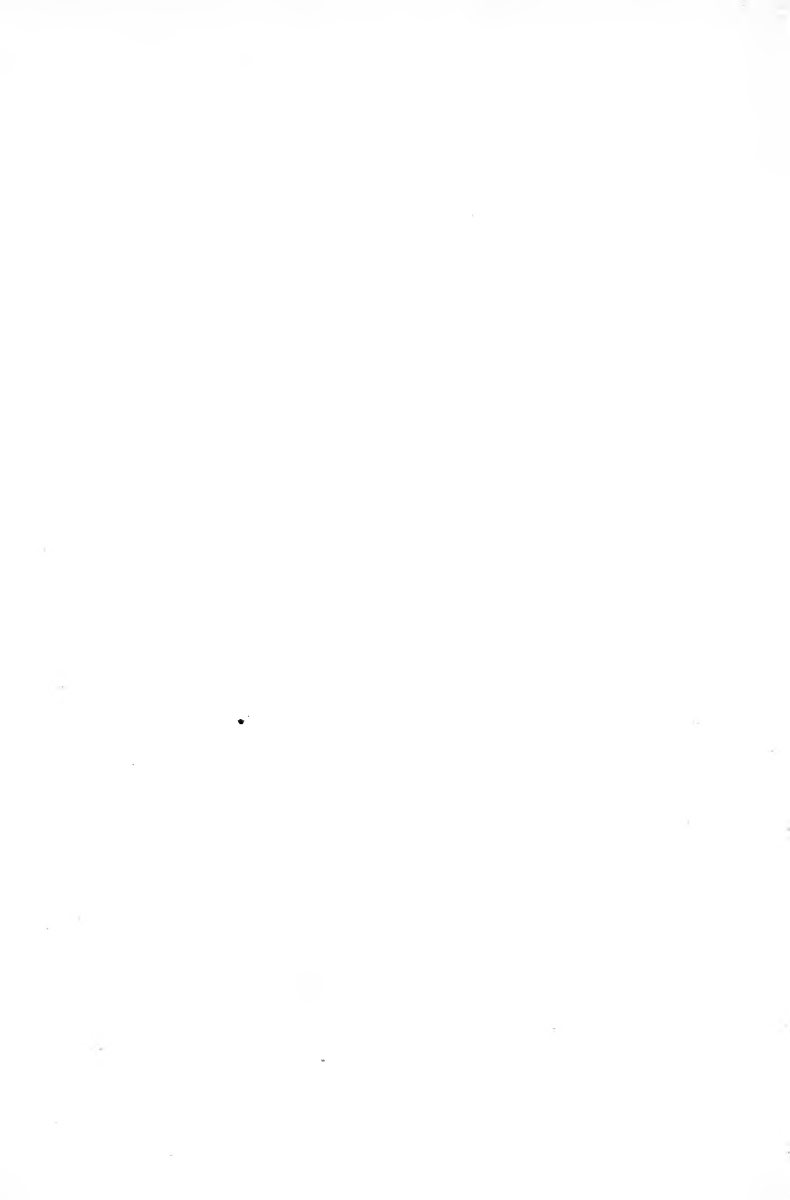
One day we missed her; she didn't come
To dinner—a most unwonted thing;
She had followed the old rat-catcher home,
We thought, to return when she'd had her fling.

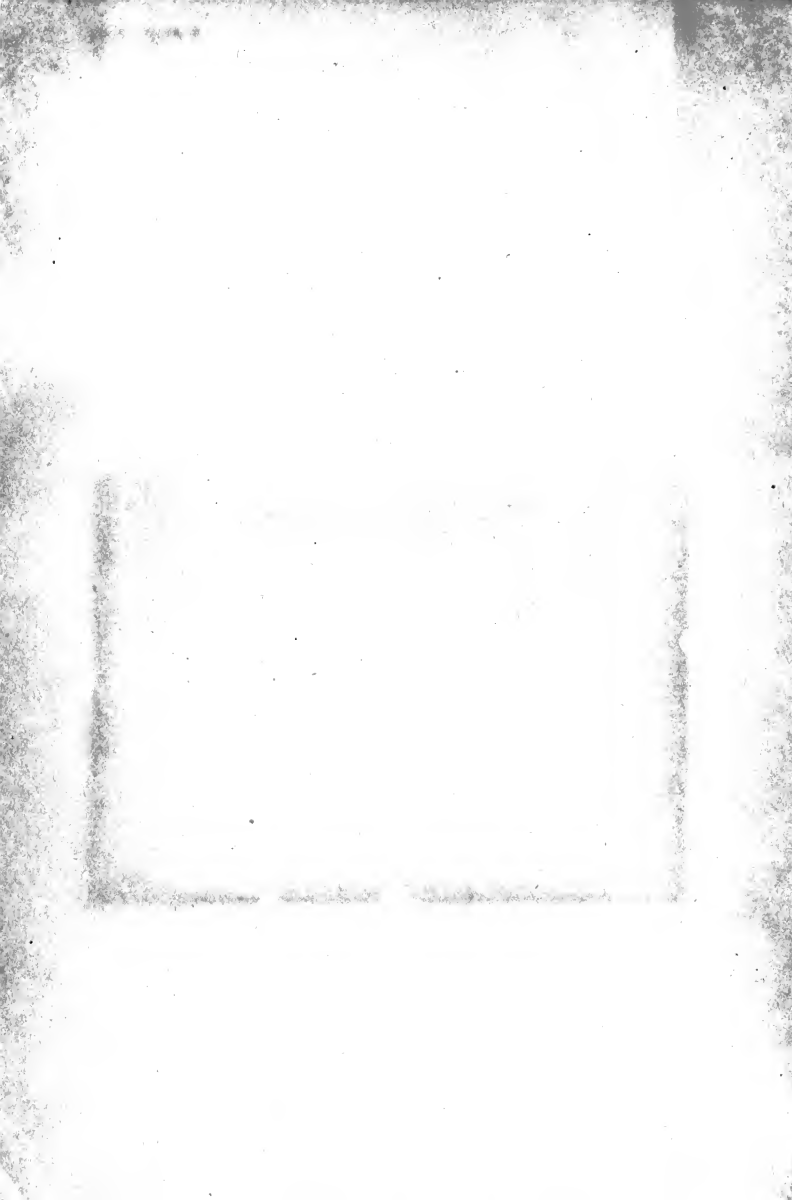
She never came back again; we sought,
But sought her vainly, everywhere,
Till, all of a sudden, occurred a thought
Of the moat—had somebody drowned her there—

Some tramp she'd bitten? She was, we knew,
A trifle free with her teeth, if vext;
So we drained the moat, and then the true
Story some out—comment and text.

For three feet down we found her dead,
Gripping a dead rat, thigh and shank—
A rat whose shoulders, fore paws and head
Were wedged in a hole in the root-bound bank.

She had chased the rat, when it made a bolt,
To the moat's steep brink, to the depths below;
She had caught it just as it gained its holt,
And died with it rather than let it go.





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